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ABSTRACT

Four career guidance programs that have proved successful in assisting students in their career development have been selected for national recognition. The programs were selected on the basis of three research-based criteria: leadership and support given the career guidance and counseling program by the institution; delivery of program activities; and collaborative and articulation efforts. The career counseling program at Kuna High School in Kuna, Idaho, is an exploratory and preparatory program with ongoing emphasis on planning for future education and careers. All students have at least 32 contact hours for purposes of career counseling, career exploration activities in language arts class, and individual interviews. The Career Planning and Employment Services at Parkland College in Champaign, Illinois, provide career guidance services to Parkland's students and to local citizens, business, industry, and agriculture. Zapata High School in Zapata, Texas, has a comprehensive career guidance and counseling program in which guidance staff coordinate the program and each teacher assumes responsibility for 13-17 students in a unique advocacy program. The Career Connections Planning system of the Volusia County Schools in DeLand, Florida, is a comprehensive school-to-work system for elementary through high school students that blends school-to-work, tech prep, and other initiatives. (MN)

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National Center for Research in Vocational Education

University of California, Berkeley

Office of Student Services' BRIEF

Volume 9, Number 2

1997 EXEMPLARY GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

by James D. Layton and Gisela Harkin

The role of career guidance and counseling in the transition of students from school to work and lifelong learning is vitally important. Career guidance and counseling serves as the crucial link between students and their chances for rewarding careers. This BRIEF describes nationally recognized career guidance programs that have been successful in assisting students in their career development.

Background

In the fall of 1996, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education's (NCRVE) Office of Student Services' (OSS) national search for exemplary career guidance and counseling programs culminated with the announcement that four programs had been selected for recognition. These programs exemplify school efforts in implementing well-integrated, comprehensive career guidance programs designed to assist all students in transitioning from school to work, and/or further education. The identified programs should serve as models for others working to develop or enhance their career guidance programs.

The Guidance and Counseling Framework

All applications for the 1996 search were reviewed by a panel of recognized professionals in the field using strict research-based criteria that focused on three clusters of components: (1) the leadership and support given the career guidance and counseling program by the institution (e.g., high school principal, community college administration, policies that support the program, evaluation, and follow-up policy and practice); (2) the delivery of program activities; and (3) the collaborative and articulation efforts.

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The first set of components—Program Support, Leadership, and Evaluation—are typical of any good program. Such programs have strong administrative support, financial assistance, a comprehensive professional development program, qualified personnel, ongoing program evaluation, and follow-up to determine program and student outcomes.

Most of the second set of components—the Career Guidance and Counseling Program Plan—are adapted from the National Career Development Guidelines. These components include self-knowledge and self-awareness; educational and occupational exploration; and decision-making and career planning. This component is included to determine how economic status, gender, culture, race, and ability differences are met. In addition, support services (e.g., peer counseling program, volunteers) and a strong career information delivery system enrich guidance programs.

The third group of components—Collaboration, Articulation, and Communication—stresses the significance of forging strong partnerships with parents, businesses, teachers, and community organizations. Effective career guidance and counseling programs have substantial community and business support.

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1997 EXEMPLARY CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

The Kuna School District's comprehensive, developmental career guidance program moves students progressively through an organized, age-appropriate curriculum. The program is based on the Idaho Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program K-12 model, which is modeled after the National Career Development Guidelines. The focus at the elementary level is on a variety of career awareness activities embedded in the curriculum. For example, parents and others visit the classroom to discuss their work, teachers relate their curriculum to jobs, and students take field trips to businesses. At the middle school level, many teachers relate their curriculum to work. In addition, two-month long classroom units are taught through the language arts classes co-facilitated by trained teachers. The curriculum for these career guidance units is developed by the Kuna middle and high school counseling staff. After taking commercial inventories and exploring career information at the seventh grade level, students in the eighth grade identify their "dependable strengths." Students leave middle school able to articulate their strengths and how they relate to the world of work. Students have access to career information from a variety of print sources and from commercial software. Students are encouraged to plan their high school program of studies based on their interests and strengths.

KUNA HIGH SCHOOL
Kuna Career Counseling Program
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The high school career guidance curriculum is both exploratory and preparatory with an ongoing emphasis on planning for future education and careers. The heart of the program takes place in language arts classes. In fact, the language arts teachers are staunch supporters of this approach to career development. Ninth grade students explore careers through commercial software programs, job clusters, fantasy job searches, and supporting videos. These activities are supplemented through several 90-minute class periods in which counselors and teachers assist students in developing high school plans. Tenth grade students focus on their interests and learning/working styles through commercial assessment instruments. In the eleventh and twelfth grades, career guidance is highly focused and more personalized. Students use print materials, videos, and computers to link with career information. They combine this information with data in their portfolio, which contains material accumulated over several years, to develop career-related research projects for language arts. These projects provide extensive career orientation through required interviews of people in the career field being studied and through job shadowing experiences. The research culminates in papers and presentations for all students. Teachers help students develop their resumes and practice interviewing through mock interviews conducted by local business people. Students also have opportunities for internship experiences.

The Kuna career guidance program is a highly collaborative, integrated effort supported through professional development. All teachers participate in a week-long work-based experience and receive training in using computer career information and guidance systems. While one high school counselor is assigned to career counseling, all the high school counseling staff believe career guidance is crucial to student development and focus much of their work with students on career exploration and planning. Parental involvement takes place at every level of career guidance activity.

Evaluation. The Kuna program is routinely evaluated in a number of ways. The program is part of the Perkins evaluation process. For accreditation purposes, the program is part of the evaluation process in both the junior high and the high schools. Student surveys are used to determine student perceptions of the program. An evaluation of the program is included in the information that is secured from spring graduates in their exit interviews. Informal counselor evaluations and anecdotal information are utilized to make changes and reinforce essential program components.

Results. The career counseling program has been very effective in providing appropriate opportunities to all students for the purpose of developing careers. Students have a minimum of 32 contact hours for the purpose of career counseling, time spent in classrooms, and individual interviews. As a result of this contact:

- students are better able to express what types of career options are of most interest to them;
- students are more familiar with training/educational options;
- students understand where information can be accessed when there are questions;
- classes have more relevance to students when these courses fit a plan for the future;
- career development competencies are demonstrated in each level with Language Arts projects resulting in a portion of a grade and are demonstrated in the student career portfolio;
- academic and career counselors share information for students;
- students come to their academic advisors with a clearer understanding of what the future holds;
- fewer students exhibit anxiety about career decision-making; and
- the time-consuming task of delivering information is reduced for the academic counselors.

1997 EXEMPLARY CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

Parkland College's Career Planning and Employment Services (CPES) is very successful in assisting students in making the transition to continuing education or the workplace. The office collaborates with faculty, administration, graduates, the local university, and business and industry to help students progress. It provides students as well as people in the community with a broad range of services including counseling, advising, testing, job placement, and other support programs designed to enhance educational experiences, promote personal growth, and supply employment assistance. The office also collects critical data on student placements, salaries, program placements, and a variety of other information used regularly for program improvement and for guiding current and prospective students. Many human resource representatives of local business and industry rely heavily on the strong pool of candidates available through CPES.

PARKLAND COLLEGE
Career Planning and Employment Services
Gerry Hough, Director
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The state supported community college located in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois has an estimated enrollment of 9,000 students. The community is unique because of its technology research and development programs and companies and its diversity resulting from the presence of the University of Illinois. In addition to services to its clientele in the college, Career Planning and Employment Services' staff also provide assistance to local citizens, business, industry, and agriculture.

A very popular monthly career development seminar is provided for anyone who wishes to attend. These seminars are designed to help students, graduates, and community members develop individual career plans based upon their own interests, abilities, and values. CPES' unique and innovative computerized job-management system matches employers with potential employees via the announcement of active openings on job bulletin boards throughout the college, with job-specific boards in each wing where specific career preparation takes place. Students, graduates, and alumni are allowed to use resume writing software to create professional resumes. Resumes are placed on-line to be reviewed by prospective employers, and job listings are available for students to use in searching for jobs of interest to them. CPES also publishes a weekly placement bulletin and distributes personalized mailings to participating students and alumni on a weekly basis. Students who wish to transfer to four-year colleges use the computer-generated lists of potential institutions selected on the basis of major, location, enrollment, and other relevant criteria. The office alerts students to their services via career fairs, college publications, in-class presentations, and orientation classes. The counseling staff of the college also support and assist with career preparation activities.

Evaluation. Annually, the CPES unit prepares a summary of its activities. The summary provides a concise overview of CPES operation, and the examination of usage patterns facilitates the development of projections that are valuable as a basis for program assessment and planning. Every five years, CPES completes a comprehensive self-study, as part of the college-wide program review process. Conclusions are based on the level and quality of services, demonstrated student satisfaction, recent innovations, major improvements, staffing analysis, equipment/facility needs, and cost trends.

Results. Participation levels are recorded for structured programs and initiatives. Success stories are communicated to CPES staff anecdotally by individuals who state that a positive outcome was achieved by someone as a result of using CPES. Results indicate:

- a high degree of student/graduate satisfaction;
- an upward trend in the number of users;
- acquisition/enhancement of planning skills;
- development of a career plan and an educational plan;
- timely and convenient access to information;
- useful computerized job-management system;
- systematic services to dislocated workers;
- incorporation of career planning and employment principles into the curriculum (concepts applied in class projects); and
- a high degree of coordination with community groups.

1997 EXEMPLARY CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

The Zapata County (Texas) Independent School District has implemented a comprehensive, developmental K-12 career guidance and counseling program, based on the National Career Development Guidelines. While Zapata is a rural border town in an economically disadvantaged area, their school system boasts less than a 1% dropout rate for grades 7 - 12 and a 94% attendance rate. The presence of a very supportive administration and caring teachers and staff make school a welcome place for Zapata youth.

ZAPATA HIGH SCHOOL
Comprehensive Career Guidance
and Counseling Program
Velma Moran Garza, Counselor
Box 3750
Zapata, TX 78076
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High school students have access to a wide range of career development assessment activities, a good career information delivery system, peer tutoring and teacher tutoring programs, and a service learning program. A unique program helps migrant students complete their studies during the shortened time period when they can be in school each year. Parents are active participants in school activities. Inter-community collaborations provide assistance with school supplies, child care, clothing, and other services to students.

The high school career guidance and counseling program is coordinated by the guidance staff, but each teacher takes responsibility for 13 to 17 students in the school's unique advocacy program called "WE." Teachers meet with their advocacy groups for 1-1/2 hours every other week to work on the career development curriculum and other age-appropriate activities to meet the career, educational planning, and social needs of every student. Groups are assigned by their graduating class and meet on a rotating schedule. In addition to the career development curriculum, the advocacy groups are structured to help students increase self-esteem and understand themselves. They discuss other age-appropriate topics, such as dating violence and date rape. As a part of this program, teachers must make a yearly home visit to provide positive feedback to parents on their children. Counselors and administrators support the teachers in this program by providing the curriculum, videos, and print materials. While teachers started the Advocacy Program with some reluctance and many doubts, they have grown to believe it is an extremely worthwhile activity that improves student behavior and increases teacher morale.

The Career Guidance and Counseling Department publishes a handbook and guide to inform all stakeholders of the different programs and graduation plan options available. The counselors meet with parents to discuss the best educational plan for their children. Counseling and career guidance are provided also to parents and other family members upon request. Parents help in the counseling office. All counselors are responsible for some training during inservice and teacher meetings.

One special academic program is the OMEGA independent study program, maintained in the Career Development Center. It serves all populations: the gifted/talented, migrant, at-risk, dropout, transfer student, and low achiever. One of the counselors is very involved with this program by motivating students to complete the high school minimum requirements. The senior class of 1996 graduated 127 out of 129 students including 2 interstate migrants, 3 previous dropouts, and 5 teen parents.

Restructuring is still occurring at Zapata High School. A customized graduation plan for all students focuses on the level of performance in math, reading and writing scores and on teacher recommendations. Students work with parents, teachers, and counselors to develop a four year plan based on their interests and aptitudes. All students will complete a career portfolio. Courses have been added to have three-year programs for career paths. There are competency profiles for every program. Zapata High School is a Texas mentor campus and an Effective Border Pilot Program. It also received the Planning for Life Award in 1996 for its counseling program.

Evaluation. The effectiveness of the Career and Technology Guidance and Counseling Program is evaluated through the services provided to special populations. The administrative staff, through self-assessment, completes a checklist in order to evaluate last year's program and to decide what needs to be accomplished during the new school year. Students fill out surveys on different strategies used by the administration such as the advocacy program. The counseling department participated in the Planning for Life Award as a form of evaluating the success of the program. Every year a senior survey is completed. Informally, through students, parents, and relatives, the counseling staff keeps tabs on what the graduates are doing.

Results. In general, evaluation of the program has revealed:

- a lower dropout rate;
- personalized graduation plans;
- increased attendance rate;
- all students being reached and served;
- requests from students for the advocacy program to be weekly;
- graduates returning to help out; and
- teachers teaching career awareness as related to their content mastery and offering service learning.

1997 EXEMPLARY CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

The Volusia Flagler Career Connection Consortium has created a seamless school-to-work system to facilitate the transition of all students. Consortium partners include Volusia County Schools, comprised of 9 high schools, 10 middle schools, and 38 elementary schools, with a total enrollment of 58,000 students; Flagler County Schools, comprised of 1 high school, 2 middle schools, and 4 elementary schools, with a total of 5,500 students; Daytona Beach Community College; and the Workforce Development Board of Flagler and Volusia counties. Together with adult community service providers, these partners strive to assist all students in making a successful transition from school to more education and eventually to work. The Consortium uses the Career Connection Planning System to provide an array of choices in educational programming that meet individual needs and engage all students in the career development process. The system has been adopted by all 10 high schools, the 12 middle schools, and the alternative education centers. The results of this young program already include increased attendance rates, decreased dropout rates, and increased applied technology enrollments and completions. Parents and teachers report an increase in student enthusiasm for course work because students now see the relevance of education to their futures.

VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
The Career Connection's Foundation:
The Career Planning System
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The Career Connection Planning system is based on the Florida Blueprint for Career Preparation Career Competencies, derived from the National Career Development Guidelines. This initiative blends School-to-Work, Tech Prep, and Carl Perkins legislation; High Schools That Work; Florida's Blueprint for Career Preparation; and Career Academies. The Career Connection collaboratively works with I.D.E.A., Title I, JTPA, Blueprint 2000, the Workforce Development Board, and the Volusia Flagler Community Transition Team (a special needs inter-agency council). By working with these programs and initiatives, the Career Connection, now in its third year of operation, provides a comprehensive school-to-work system for all students.

District teachers, administrators, and staff work to make their vision of Linking Learning to Life a reality. This motto is prominently displayed in school classrooms and halls, as well as on stationary, coffee mugs, and other places. Teachers use techniques acquired in a strong professional development program to relate classroom learning to real life. A Career Planning Sequence for grades 6-12 is currently in use. A link to the elementary schools was piloted in two schools during 1996-1997.

The elementary and middle school career awareness and exploration programs prepare all students to understand themselves and the world of work. During middle school, a career planning and development curriculum is infused into regular classes. Results of student interest inventories and other assessments and career development activities are kept as part of their V.I.S.A. (Visual Information of Student Assessment/Activities). Students and their parents use their V.I.S.A. to select a career cluster in high school and design a 4-6-8 year course of study. Career Plans are updated annually with help of counselors and a Career Connection Facilitator.

All the area high schools are at some stage of organizing their curriculum around career clusters, with some schools having the clusters in place. The Career Planning System is designed to help students and parents make wise decisions when opting for a career cluster and a plan of study. Of course, there is total flexibility in moving between clusters as students mature and make new choices.

In 9th grade, all students take a Career Research class where they begin to develop their student portfolio. It contains their numerous high school career development activities, which may include more career and educational assessments; information on their internships, youth apprenticeships, job shadowing, and career mentors; resumes; vocational education; and a senior project based on the students' chosen career cluster. They also begin the development of their Passport, the students' link to post secondary options. The Passport includes a career research section, a SCANS competency acquisition section, and a career job search section. Extensive collaborative efforts exist between the schools and the community, including business and industry and community colleges. Parents are active participants in schools.

Evaluation. The Consortium is currently developing a project management tool that will include a Career Connection Report Card. An evaluation subcommittee, comprised of business and industry representatives, leads program evaluations and analyzes the information to ensure continuous quality improvement. Success is measured by students' acquisition of the Blueprint for Career Preparation Career Competencies. An information reporting system for students within Volusia County Schools is being developed to incorporate individual student information into the district's management information system.

The Career Planning System has been recognized as exemplary by the Florida Departments of Labor and Education. School-based personnel report that the planning system engages all students in the career development process and that students are provided an array of choices in educational programming that meets their individual needs.

The Career Connection Coach, a mobile career resource center equipped with the latest multimedia technology, is very popular not only with students, but with teachers and business people. It is used year-round and has expanded to include alternate education centers, the juvenile justice system, and summer youth programs. The Coach has proven to be successful in helping students focus their career interests and plan their courses in high school and beyond to prepare for the jobs they want.

Results. Overall, the Career Planning System has resulted in:

- increased attendance rates;
- decreased dropout rates;
- increased applied technology enrollments and completion;
- increased student enthusiasm for coursework; and
- increased business involvement.

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